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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Beth Bye
Commissioner

DATE: December 10, 2020 REVISED January 15, 2021 REVISED January 28, 2021 REVISED February 24, 2021 REVISED June 14, 2021 **REVISED June 24, 2021**

TO: School Readiness, Child Day Care, and Smart Start funded programs

FROM: Beth Bye, Commissioner

RE: Coronavirus Memo #35 **REVISED**
FY 21 Funding for School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start

Revision February 24, 2021	Update: Addition in item 1 regarding month of March to funding plan; new item 2 regarding funding beginning April 2021; item 6, Priority district family fee replacement payment; and paragraph headed 'Additional Information for School Readiness Program'
Revision June 14, 2021	Update: Addition of information on Supplemental Administrative Funds for priority and competitive School Readiness districts
Revision June 24, 2021	Update: Changed Family Fee Replacement Payment to Priority District Enrollment Stipend

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) strives to support the early childhood infrastructure during the public health emergency by adapting its funding structures for Child Day Care, School Readiness, and Smart Start programs. As the impact of COVID-19 changes, and health and safety protocols shift, so too have our fiscal supports for program operations. A number of funding models have been implemented, including a summer funding model, and a classroom equivalent model based on utilization starting in September, with a 25% operating enhancement as needed, and during the height of the pandemic a full funding model.

This memo sets out changes to support program stability and ensure that families have access to early learning opportunities for their children. All funds provided to School Readiness, Child Day Care and Smart Start programs for SFY 21 are state appropriations.

1. For December 2020, and January, February and March 2021, the OEC will provide full funding allocations to programs for sites that meet the requirements for State-Funded Programs Providing Remote Learning as articulated in [Memo 34](#), and for each site that receives OEC School Readiness, Child Day Care and/or Smart Start funds:

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- a. Is open to serve children on-site or remotely, or
- b. Is closed due to local health or a governing body decision, and
- c. Continues to employ sufficient staff to effectively engage children and families in in-person/on-site, remote, or hybrid learning at all sites requesting funds.

In-person/on-site care and education remains a priority. However, as indicated in [Memo 34](#), programs may provide remote or hybrid options for learning. Programs, or sites within a multi-site organization, that are not open to serve children and do not provide a remote option will not receive funding. It is especially important that programs and liaisons maintain current contact information with OEC, especially during the public health emergency.

2. Beginning in April 2021 the OEC will fund School Readiness and Child Day

Care programs based on enrollment with the following equivalencies:

- a. 16 preschool children per classroom; Classroom size and funding amounts will be based on 11-20 children for a full classroom and 1-10 children for a half classroom.
- b. 8 infants and toddlers per classroom. Classroom size and funding amounts will be based on 5 - 8 children for a full classroom and 1-4 children for a half classroom; and
- c. As needed up to a 25% operating enhancement, not to exceed the full funding allocation.

3. For the November 2020 reporting period, classroom equivalents will be divided by 16 instead of 20. Classroom size and funding amounts have not changed and will continue to be based on 11-20 children for a full classroom and 1-10 children for a half classroom. Please note that the deadline for the SR and CDC reports has been extended through December 18, 2020.

4. Programs will submit the Remote Learning Attestation(s) provided by OEC indicating the learning models (hybrid, remote learning as a program model, and/or remote learning as a family choice) currently implemented, or planned for implementation in the case of a closure, and agreeing to adhere to stated requirements.

- a. The deadline to submit the form for services provided at time of this memo is February 8, 2021.
- b. If the learning model or planned learning model(s) changes, the program is required to update the attestation within one week of implementing the changes. The attestation remains in effect unless changed by the program.

5. Organizations that provide services at more than one facility are required to meet the criteria at a funded site in order to receive payment for services at that site.

- a. If a site does not meet the criteria for funding as outlined in item 1 above, please notify the appropriate OEC Program Manager.

6. School Readiness and Child Day Care programs located in Priority Districts that meet the criteria in items 1 and 4 above will be provided a Priority District Enrollment Stipend. This payment is calculated on an average family fee of \$145 per child for two children per classroom per month for sites that are open per paragraph 1 above for six months during SFY 21. The classroom equivalent is based on the total number of funded children per a classroom of 16 preschoolers or school age children or 8 infants and toddlers. The formula is as follows:

- a. # classrooms x \$290 per month x 6 months = \$ Priority District Enrollment Stipend.

Reporting

Reports for each funding stream shall be submitted according to the established deadlines (with the exception of the November 2020 report) and should accurately reflect the actual number of children receiving services during the reporting period. Programs may contact their respective program manager with questions regarding reporting or submission deadlines.

Additional information for Child Day Care Programs

In addition to the above commitments for SFY 21 funding, Child Day Care Programs will receive a rate increase for full-time preschool spaces to achieve parity with School Readiness Full-Day/Full-Year rates. This increased rate will be provided as the base rate for full-time preschool spaces, irrespective of funding model, from the beginning of the SFY 21 contract period (October 2020) and forward.

OEC will compute the space rate as follows for full-time preschool spaces:

- b. For September 2020, the original FY21 rate is applied to full-time preschool spaces utilized;
- c. For October and November 2020, the increased rate is applied to full-time preschool spaces utilized;
- d. For December 2020 and January 2021, the increased rate is applied to full-time preschool spaces allocated; and
- e. For 3rd Quarter and beyond, the increased rate will be reflected in the amounts provided in the quarterly payments throughout SFY 21.

Additional information for Smart Start Programs

Public Schools that are funded with Smart Start funds receive their full funding allocation for SFY 21 and are required to engage children and families in in-person, remote, or hybrid learning. The OEC will provide full funding allocations to programs that:

- a. Are open to serve children on-site or remotely, or
- b. Are closed due to local health or a governing body decision,
- c. Maintain enrollment of at least 11 children per funded classroom, and
- d. Continue to employ sufficient staff to effectively engage children and families in in-person, remote, or hybrid learning.

In-person/on-site care and education remains a priority. However, as indicated in [Memo 34](#), Requirements for State-Funded Programs Providing Remote Learning, programs may provide remote or hybrid options for learning.

Additional information for School Readiness Program

The competitive bid process required by OEC for School Readiness Quality Enhancement funds is waived for the remainder of FY 21.

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is aware that the pandemic has brought increased responsibilities to School Readiness Liaisons and has presented barriers to conducting on-site monitoring activities to ensure program quality. In response, the OEC is providing Supplemental Administrative Funds to Priority and Competitive School Readiness districts to support Liaisons in their efforts to support programs as they transition through the recovery phase of the pandemic, and to enhance monitoring processes and practices with the goal of increasing program quality.

1. School Readiness Councils may request up to the maximum Supplemental Administrative Funds available to each district.
 - a. The maximum amount of Supplemental Administrative Funds is calculated as 1.5 % of each district's FY 2021 Space Funding Allocation.
 - b. Supplemental Administrative funds districts are eligible to receive are in addition to the Administrative Funds awarded through the FY 22 School Readiness grant process.
2. Requests for Supplemental Administrative Funds are to be submitted to the Office of Early Childhood by July 1, 2021.
 - a. Requests must be submitted on the Supplemental Administrative Funds form provided by the OEC and must specify the following:
 1. The quality improvement goals being funded
 2. Amount of funds requested for each goal
 3. Brief Description of the Council's plan for implementation of each goal
 4. Anticipated Indicators of progress for each goal
 5. Signature indicating Council approval and Attestation
 - a. Request requires signature of one of the following:
 - i. Chief Elected Official or designee
 - ii. District Superintendent or designee
3. Supplemental Administrative Funds are intended to support the Liaison in the role of monitoring and enhancing program quality.
 - a. Councils are required to allocate a portion up to the full amount of the Supplemental Administrative Funds to be paid directly to the Liaison to:
 1. Compensate the Liaison for increased responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery period; and
 - b. Councils may provide additional supports to the Liaison to enhance monitoring with the goal of increasing program quality.
 1. Councils may contract with outside Consultants to enhance the existing monitoring system that includes a process for creating feedback loops between programs, the liaison and Council and identifies a specific process for resolving issues and enhancing program quality.
 - a. Enhancement to the process and practices associated with the implementation of a robust system for monitoring may address:

- i. the 11 quality components,
 - ii. NAEYC Accreditation/Head Start approval, and
 - iii. general program requirements including review of licensing and health and safety inspections, alignment of curriculum and assessment to the CT-ELDS and implementation of the sliding fee scale and Registry requirements.
 - 2. Councils may propose other initiatives intended to enhance monitoring processes, practices and program quality by providing a written description of proposed goal.
- 4. Review and Approval of Supplemental Administrative Fund requests
 - a. Requests must be approved by the School Readiness Council prior to submission to the OEC.
 - 1. Requests must be signed and attested these funds shall be used to support the identified Quality Improvement Goals indicated. Office of Early Childhood may request the funds designated be returned for any activity not fully implemented.
 - b. OEC shall review and approve requests upon receipt
 - 1. The District Fiscal contact, the Liaison and Council shall be notified of approval.
 - 2. Payments will be issued to the School Readiness Fiscal Agent
 - a. The Council is responsible for maintaining documentation of the activities, funds expended and indicators of progress for each funded goal and shall provide this information to the OEC upon request.

We continue to support early childhood programs during the public health crisis by adapting payment structures and policies.